

Kimball Block Rowhouses
Brick Row
West side "A" Avenue, between
9th and 10th Sts.
National City
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-1969

HABS
CAL
21-NATC,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN ARCHITECTURAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS
CAL
37-NATC
3-

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE CALIFORNIA	COUNTY SAN DIEGO	TOWN OR VICINITY NATIONAL CITY
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) KIMBALL BLOCK ROWHOUSES		HABS NO. CA-1969
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE BRICK ROW		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES) West side "A" Avenue, between 9th and 10th sts.		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) Sept. 1887 - spring 1888	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE) R. C. Ball	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) A two-story, ten-unit row house, the Kimball Block is unique in the San Diego area, though its prototype is typical of east-coast urban design.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE) Queen Anne		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) See pages 2 through 4 below: "Architectural Information" for this and categories below.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE See National Register of Historic Places nomination form (copy included in field records accompanying this report).		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) See HABS field records accompanying this report for additional data and bibliography.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Kim S. Purgeon, Supervisor, HABS San Diego project		DATE 1975

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This "brick row," built by Frank Kimball in 1887/88 as housing for officials of the California Southern Railroad, is a unique collection of buildings in Southern California. The 10-dwelling, 2-story tenement was constructed according to drawings sent from Philadelphia. The Philadelphia rowhouse scheme stood in contrast to the detached residences so prevalent in the city at that time.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good.

B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The total size of the ten-unit complex is 250' x 45'; each unit was 25' x 45' with the narrow side facing the street.
2. Layout, shape: Each unit is L-shaped and the plan is "flipped" for every other unit, thus creating U-shaped rear service yards.
3. Foundations: Brick foundations, three feet deep on mortar. (Frank Kimball, the builder, owned the brickyard in National City).
4. Wall construction, finish, color: The walls are of brick bearing wall construction. Currently portions of the main facade are painted white. Other portions remain in natural brick of common red and buff tones. Concrete lintels are set in the walls over the openings. Half of each unit has a half-pediment, which when coupled with the adjacent one, is complete.
5. Structural system, framing: 2" x 10" joists, 25' long, span between the party walls and are carried on 4" x 6" stringers. The wood is redwood. Reinforcing rods with 8" washers on the outside anchor the front and rear walls.
6. Porches: Along the front facade (east) is a one-story wood porch. Every two bays of the porch corresponds to the party wall line. Turned spindles and carved brackets decorate the porches. Each porch is separated from the next by wood dividers, although in reality the porch is continuous. The south end unit has a slide porch with the same decorative details.
7. Chimneys: According to accounts, there were a total of 16 chimneys originally (there was a utility chimney at the rear of the units). Many of the chimneys have been removed, although four remaining chimneys are located at intervals along the main facade.

8. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There is a main entry to each unit from the front porch. Service entrances are located at the rear, on the court side of each unit. Panel doors with glass lights are common.
 - b. Windows: All windows are double-hung. On the main facade each unit has a grouping of three windows on each level, 2 single windows on the second floor and a single window on the first. At the rear, double-hung windows, grouped and singular, are found.
9. Roof: The roof is built up, and was put in place by Frank Kimball when the original roof leaked. He used alternate layers of canvas covered with shellac, building up a roof of sufficient thickness and weatherproofing. These layers were uncovered when conventional composition roofing was placed later.

There is a parapet with a brick corbeled top. A sheet metal cornice is placed atop the corbel.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: (The floor plan described is that of 926 "A" Avenue, selected because of its relative completeness and original work. The plan is the same for every other unit; the remainder of the units have the reverse version of the plan).

First floor: From the front porch, entry is made to an entry/stair hall, having an open-rail stairway against the right hand (north) wall. To the left (south) is the living room, having a fireplace centered on the south wall. Windows are located on the east and west walls. At the end of the short hall is the dining room, with a fireplace on the north wall and windows on the south wall. Beyond the dining room is a laundry room (NW corner of the plan) and a kitchen (SW corner of the plan).

Second floor: At the top of the stairs is a hall (against the north wall except where it aligns with the south side of the stairs). Over the entry hall is a small chamber. A large master bedroom is situated over the living room and corresponds in size to the room below. Along the south side of the hall are two more chambers; the hall is terminated by a bathroom.

2. Stairways: The stairway is located against the party wall of the unit. There are three risers and a landing, then 17 risers to the second floor. The stairway had an open railing, the wood balusters of which are turned and square.

3. Flooring: Wood board flooring is used with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom which are of asphalt tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Lath and plaster. Molded plasterwork surrounds the light fixtures in the ceilings of the hall, living room and dining room.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All doors have 4 vertical panels (2 over 2). The trim around the doors is of molded board, with carved block corners where jamb and head meet. All the trim is of molded stained wood.
6. Decorative features and trim: The wood balusters of the stair rail are turned pieces alternating with simple square spindles. The door trim stands in contrast to the plain wall surfaces. Molded plaster-work is found on the ceiling at hanging fixtures. All major rooms have a picture rail 18" from the ceiling. The fireplace mantels are black with gold painted stencil work.
7. Hardware: Standard hardware is employed - butt hinges, knobs, etc.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Heating is handled with portable heaters connected to the fireplaces.
 - b. Fireplaces: Fireplaces are of cast-iron with black pre-cast "stone" mantels and facings decorated with stenciled gold.
 - c. Lighting: Electric..
 - d. Plumbing: Standard indoor fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The block of buildings is situated on the west side of "A" Avenue facing east and extends from 9th Street on the north to 10th Street on the south. An alley is on the west side. There is a shallow strip of lawn between the sidewalk and the houses. There are no other structures in the composition.

On the rear side, the pattern of buildings creates U-shaped rear yards between every pair of units.

Prepared by:
Robert C. Giebner, Supervisor
HABS San Diego Project
Summer 1971

ADDENDUM TO
KIMBALL BLOCK ROW HOUSES
(BRICK ROW)
West Side of "A" Avenue Between Ninth and Tenth Streets
National City
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-1969

HABS
CAL,
37-NATC,
3-

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013